

KOKUA HAWAII ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW WITH  
**Sally Tagalog**

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Sally Tagalog  
Photo courtesy Tagalog Family

Soledad “Sally” Tagalog was the first wife of the late “Pete” Peciong Jumauan Tagalog, who lived in the community of Ota Camp in Waipahu and led more than 130 tenants to successfully fight against an eviction. Sally supported Pete who was president of the Ota Camp Makibaka Association. Their patio became the meeting place for many weekly discussions and the first stop for visitors to the community. Even after their divorce, Sally remained his friend, living in the family house at Ota Camp, where they raised son Darrell and daughters Laverne, Grace, Vivian, Annette, and Abigail. His second wife Nora lived nearby in Ota Camp along with their daughters Leonette and Naomi, and son Kimo. Sally was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on March 14, 2017, at her home in Ota Camp in West Loch, where the community was moved

*through financial support from the city that donated the land and the state that built the houses with an option to buy. Pete died on May 28, 2012, at age 80.*

GK: Good morning, Sally. When and where were you born and raised?

ST: I was born in 1932 and raised in the sugar plantation in Waialua. My dad worked as a grader operator. He was from Pangasinan in the Philippines. My father’s language is a mixture of Chinese and Polynesian.

GK: How did you meet Pete?

ST: At the baseball park. It was during the Waipahu and Waialua baseball league game. He was attending the game and was looking at me with binoculars.

GK: Oh really.

ST: Yeah, my girlfriend Jane said, “Somebody keeps on pointing at you.” I said, “No, it’s not me, Jane. It’s you.” She said, “No, it’s you, Sally.” Then when I look, he was waving at me. I went to the car. There was some Filipino boys in the car with Pete. Pete doesn’t look Filipino, you know. He looked kind of mixed. I said, “Are you Filipino?” He said, “Yes.” I

## Sally Tagalog Interview

said, “Oh, how come you’re so different?” I was kind of young at that time, so we talk and talk. He started writing letters to me. Pete and I eloped when we were only in the eleventh grade. Eventually, we did get married.

GK: Where did he live?

ST: Waipahu. His father worked at the sugar mill.

GK: When did you and Pete move to Ota Camp?

ST: We got married in 1950 and moved sometime in 1953. We stayed with this Filipino man in Ota Camp, then a neighbor’s house. Pete was working as an air-conditioner technician.

GK: Can you describe what happened when you first received the eviction notice?

ST: Well, this guy came and gave us a month’s notice and told us we had to move out. Pete stood up and said, “Where is the black and white? Show it to me.” He said, “No, you have to get out.” He was kind of sarcastic.

GK: Do you remember any meetings with residents?

ST: Yes.

GK: How did that go?

ST: It was hard to get the Visayans and Ilocanos together. They have different dialects. But Pete talked with them, using Pidgin English. If he had used standard English, they would never have understood Pete.

GK: Organizing the community must have taken quite a bit of time?

ST: A lot of times, Pete cannot help me around the house and with the six children—one boy and five girls. Sometimes, I had to be a father to them. I had to help them do their homework. But I didn’t grumble. I just had to be understanding and patient.

GK: You also worked at a sewing factory in Kalihi?

ST: Yes, it was in Hikina Lane. The owner made aloha shirts. I was a trimmer. It was pretty hard work. I caught the bus to work. I was earning a dollar something an hour. I also worked as a telephone operator, and a paramedical teacher, doing sign language at Waimanu Homes.

GK: You were so hospitable. Every time I'd visit Pete in the morning, you'd offer me a cup of coffee. How did you feel when people from the outside came to help fight the eviction of Ota Camp?

ST: I was happy. Without the supporters, I don't know what we would have done. They provided all kinds of support and education. They gave us advice. There were ladies who came, too. Ota Camp resident Johnny Dombrique was a strong supporter of Pete and, of course, Pete's brother Candido.

GK: Right. I know that especially after the Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi offered to give tenants the land in West Loch, Pete was invited to speak at a number of communities facing eviction. There was Census Tract 57 People's Movement in Kalihi and Third Arm in Chinatown. He even got to meet Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers union who was visiting Chinatown asking for people to boycott lettuce from California. I'm wondering if he ever went to Waiahole-Waikane to speak?

ST: Yes, he did.

GK: Certain kinds of things that were done in Ota Camp were replicated in other eviction struggles, and frankly, Waiahole-Waikane was another win. I know Pete had worked at Heide & Cook as a refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic.

ST: Yes. He went out to speak to a lot of communities. He retired from Catholic Charities Palama Settlement. He wanted to further his studies but never could because of his work fighting the eviction.

GK: How are your children doing?

ST: My son Darrell now lives on the Big Island. He did really well as a massage therapist. He's met a lot of celebrities and renowned business owners, such as Dell and Howard Schultz, the owner of Starbucks. Laverne earned her bachelor's degree in sociology. The rest of my children are doing well. You know Abigail's daughter, Jhanteigh Kupihea, works as a senior editor for Simon & Schuster in New York.

